The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home

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Daffodils.

The golden trumpets of the Spring,
Now through the world their challenge fling.
"Awake!" they say, "Awake, old Earth
Once more to joy, and hope, and mirth!"

The year has turned; the sullen days,
The biting winds, the miry ways,
Shrink back at an Enchanter's wand
Who sends his heralds through the land.

Audacious, bright, they lift their heads
Like children laughing from their beds,
And meet their mother's eye of care
By blowing peals of music rare.

"Poor mother! did she dream that Death
Was lord of Love, and Hope, and Breath?
Come out and dance! we'll pipe and play
Till Death shall smile those dreams away."

Dorothea Hollins.

Peace and submission are the essentials. . . . The moral being may moralize his sufferings by using natural facts for his own inner education. What he cannot change he calls the will of God, and to will what God wills brings him peace.—*Amiel's Journal.*

We can all be servants of God wherever our lot is cast. But he gives us different sorts of work according as he fits us for it. When duty is clear, to put one's self questions about it is to suffer defeat.—*Victor Hugo.*

The New Theology and its Pioneers.

A Sermon by the Rev. Joseph Wood.

"*What is this New Teaching?*"—Mark I., 27.

It was the writer of Ecclesiastes, the Pessimist of the Old Testament, who said: "There is nothing new under the sun," and people have gone on repeating that saying ever since as if it were the quintessence of wisdom. Whereas it would be far truer to say: "Everything under the Sun is new." The world does not grow old so that we of the twentieth century have to be satisfied with the rags and remnants of it. It is newly created every morning. Because you and I are new comers the whole great world into which we are born is *new for us.* Some one has imagined and envied the feelings of the first man, the Adam of the race, who first saw the sun go down, setting in unimaginable glory. But created as we are, each with a distinct individuality never seen before, each of us *discovers the world* for himself as if each were a new Columbus. Whose eyes but mine first saw the sun set? The sun was created with you and with me; and by and by when we had got over the morning of infancy, we stood, on a hilltop, or by the sea-shore, and our childish eyes being by that time opened, we saw the sun go down then and there for the first time. Nor is this newness of things confined to the external. No human passion, no emotion,

the fiercest or the tenderest, comes to us at second-hand. No experience ever exactly reduplicates itself. The fact that it is *my* experience and mine under the conditions of life in the twentieth century, makes it different. Between the great boundary walls of the two significant events, Birth and Death, nothing happens to-day exactly as it happened yesterday. As Val puts it in Miss Atherton's great novel—"If there never was any 'me' in the world before, the world's a different place now there's 'me' in it." And in like manner Goethe exclaims, "Nature is always interesting, because she is always renewing the observer." Everything under the sun is new.

Therefore I do not quarrel with the phrase which is exciting so much attention and receiving so much criticism—"The New Theology." When we are told that it is as old as Christianity itself I agree. That it is what some of us have been preaching all our lives is also true. That its outstanding ideas can be found amply set forth, not only in Spinoza, Emerson, and Martineau, but in the more orthodox writers of the Broad Church Party, is not to be questioned. But all this does not make it less a new teaching, since it comes to us under new conditions, with an accent and an emphasis which it has not before received. Christ's two great commandments, love to God and love to man, were as old as the Mosaic law, and he quoted them directly from the ancient Scriptures of his people. Yet as he uttered them, placed them, emphasised them, interpreted them, how absolutely new they became. It was like the difference between a fine picture seen in a corner of a dimly-lighted room, surrounded by a crowd of glaring efforts that spoiled the eye for the one work of genius, and the same picture hung by itself in a room flooded with the purest light. It is the same picture, and yet to the looker-on it is new. Much of the teaching of the Master is not original, but as it fell from his lips, as it received illustration in his life, as it sounded in the new conditions of thought and in the new environment of his time, it came to men with all the freshness of a new and glorious morning. In like manner the Apostle John wrote to his disciples. "I give no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning." Yet in the same letter he breaks out, "A new commandment I write unto you," and it appears that the old and the new are the same. For the old is felt to be new when it speaks with an arresting voice which compels us to listen, and for the first time sends its word sounding through all the chambers of our being. We knew it of old, but heeded it not; since it was so familiar it was a truism and a commonplace. But now with that unexpected accent, with that tremendous emphasis, and under the conditions of a new mental and moral atmosphere, it stands out as a new message from the Eternal.

Thirty years ago a little band of Congregational Ministers were saying the same things that Mr. Campbell has forced upon the public attention to-day. But these men were before their time; the press took no notice of them; their deliverances aroused no public attention outside the Congregational Union. It was not that they were men wanting in ability. Mr. Picton and Mr. Mark Wilks were in nothing inferior to Mr. Campbell, not in scholarship, nor preaching power, nor force of character. But the conditions were not favourable, and it was possible for the Congregational Union to set up a heresy hunt, which drove my two friends, the leaders, out of its ranks. Such a heresy hunt, thank God, is not possible to-day. Mr. Campbell's environment is different from theirs. He speaks the same revolutionary, progressive word, but under conditions which give it a new emphasis and a new arresting power.

Looking back on the history of Christendom, to go no farther afield, we see that there have been times of crisis and epochs of thought from which the world started afresh and all things became new. And the newness largely consisted in bringing to the front and making everything of things that had been in the background, their importance for ages obscured by the clamour of a crowd of inferior ideas. In the present day we are witnessing one of these periods, when a fresh start is made in the realms of thought and life. We have heard much in recent years about the new criticism, the new woman, the new chemistry, the new physics, the new psychology, the new ethics, the new methods

of locomotion, new and wireless telegraphy, and now we hear without surprise of the New Theology. But the fact is in every age the world is leaving the old and entering upon the new. In a measure of which many of us little dream, every generation passes through a revolution. Old things disappear, many things become new, as each fresh phalanx of the human army marches forth into the world. The young spirit is revolutionary like young wine; it ferments and strains the skins of the past to bursting. Society is always casting its skin. There has rarely been a century in human story, in which there has not been an upheaval of thought; in which the horizon has not been widened; in which the drums have not sounded to the assault of some old citadel of darkness, in which the standards of truth have not been carried farther up the heights. But of all such periods of change and revolution none have excelled the time in which we ourselves are living. We are passing through a reformation more startling than that which brought forth the Protestant Church. Thought is undergoing a change more radical than any other age of Christendom can record. Only we must not forget that it all has its roots in the past. What is called the New Theology is not the fruit of any one recent movement, school, or party, but the slow outgrowth of the moral, intellectual, and religious life of centuries. Science, history, literature, philosophy, art, social dreams, ethical ideals, political changes, have all contributed elements to that new and larger interpretation of religion which is a feature of our time.

The instructed mind of to-day could not be expected to adjust itself comfortably to the ancient creeds and confessions of the Church. Apart from everything else, science has fixed an impassable gulf between the modern world and the old theology which can never be recrossed or filled in. Science makes this world more divine, not less; more of a *Theophany*—an unveiling of God. It has made possible grander and more spiritual conceptions of God. Historical science has swept away much. It has made incredible much that once passed as history. It has, for instance, removed Adam and Eve, and the Garden, and the talking Serpent, and the Fall to the region of parable and allegory. It has placed the story of the Virgin Birth among the beautiful myths of devout imagining. Again, the science known as Comparative Religion—that is the comparative study of the religions of the world, has changed the attitude of the thoughtful man to other faiths than his own. Further, the democratic movement with all it implies as to the growing sense of the value of man as man, with the development of the sentiments of justice and sympathy, make it quite impossible to go on believing, at least in their old forms, many of the theological ideas of the past. In fact, influences from many quarters have contributed to the demand for a re-interpretation of the entire intellectual aspect of the Christian Faith. There is nothing fixed and final and complete in the Church's apprehension of things, because Truth is infinite, and the knowledge of it grows from generation to generation and becomes deeper and more vital with all new experiences and all new human conditions.

The fundamental and vital thing about the new Theology is the substitution of the religion of the spirit for the religion of authority. The Protestant Reformation, while it asserted the right of private judgment as against the authority of the Church, limited that right by the claim of an authoritative and infallible book. Protestantism has been a form of authority-religion, just as truly as Romanism. The difference between them was great, yet ultimately it resolved itself into choosing one authority rather than another. The authority of the Bible has lasted nearly 400 years, with many advantages, but also, with many disastrous results. The unhappy belief that the words of the Bible taken sentence by sentence are a storehouse of theological information and of dogmas for ever binding upon the soul, instead of being in their general tenour a perennial source of spiritual power and guidance, has interposed itself as an impenetrable barrier between the thought of the Church and the mind of Christ. The assertion that a man cannot believe in God, cannot believe that light and love are at the heart of the universe, unless he also believes certain dogmas about Christ, the Virgin Birth, and the bodily resurrection recorded in

the Bible, leads ultimately to atheism in the inner recesses of the soul, whatever be the creed confessed by the lips.

What we see now is a revolt, not against the Bible, but against the claims made for it to be the ultimate and final court of appeal on all matters of faith, conscience, and life. The first step in the direction of Liberal Christianity is always a reasonable view of the Bible, its dethronement from infallibility to the more human, rational and helpful position of a friend, liable indeed to error, as are all friends, but with a wondrous wealth of gracious wisdom and inspiring truth for our comfort and learning. Protestant theologians are quite right in thinking that any weakening of the authority of the Bible, that is of its infallibility, means the destruction of their dogmatic systems. You cannot go on preaching the ruin of man by the Fall when once you admit that the story of the Fall is a myth; and when the doctrine of the Fall has gone many other doctrines begin to totter. You cannot treat the story of the Fall as a myth, and yet retain a right to the Christian name, while denying that name to those who treat the story of the Virgin Birth as a myth. You cannot set aside the miracles of the Old Testament and declare that the miracles of the New Testament are necessary to Christian reality. When once your ultimate Court of Appeal is changed from a book to reason enlightened by conscience, experience and affection, you cannot regard the Word of God as confined to the Bible, or the Bible as containing only the Word of God. The first step in the New Theology is the discovery that the word of God is not bound, not confined within the covers of a book, not heard only in ancient records, "A history only of departed things." Thousands of men who never make an avowal of it, having the fear of popular prejudice before their eyes, know perfectly well that in this ancient record marks of human limitation appear everywhere. The theory of a book miraculously perfect in all its parts has completely broken down. The word of God is not the only word in the Bible. It contains a great many words of sinning, suffering, fallible men. The Word of God is not confined to ancient Scriptures. Here in the life and cities of the West, no less than on lonely Sinai, the Word of God is spoken in new accents, radiant with new ideals, by poets, preachers, social reformers. This is the primary article of the New Theology.

The supernatural divinity of the Bible—so long the bed-rock of Orthodox Theology—has passed away for all who believe that God still speaks, that the Eternal is in touch with the heart of men to-day as truly as in any olden time. Are we worse off than Abraham, Isaiah, or John? Not so. The New Theology declares that God's Word cannot have been spoken at a single time to a single people, to be existent now in writings intelligible to most nations only in translations—but that it is and must be an eternally speaking word, now as ever, and intelligible to all men. The Word of God is spoken to the spirit of man in history, conscience, reason, experience, and nature. The Word of God is not a book, nor a creed—the Word of God is "the Spirit of Wisdom—the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness which maketh all things new, and in all ages entering into Holy Souls maketh them friends of God and prophets."

Contrasts.

If all the skies were sunshine,
Our faces would be fain
To feel once more upon them
The cooling plash of rain.

If all the world were music,
Our hearts would often long
For one sweet strain of silence
To break the endless song.

If life were always merry,
Our souls would seek relief,
And rest from weary laughter
In the quiet arms of grief.

Henry Van Dyke.

The entire object of true education is to make people not only do the right thing, but enjoy the right thing.—*Ruskin.*

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Kisses and Caresses.

THE normal and ordinary ups and downs of matrimonial life have appeared to one of our gravest contemporaries not unworthy of being discussed. To lose the advantage of the counsels of so instructive a guide to connubial felicity as the *Saturday Review*, would be nothing short of cruelty to our readers; and we shall, therefore, endeavour in our feeble way to render those dictates of wisdom with which it has lately favoured the world on the subject more accessible to the public. The great drawback to domestic comfort, according to our instructor, is, so to speak, the extreme tiresomeness of women. "Many a woman," he complains, "goes into her room and has a cry merely because her husband has called her by her baptismal name, and not by some absurd nickname invented in the days of their folly. The lover has merged in the husband, and the woman does not take kindly to the transformation." A little further on he remarks: "All that excess of flattering and petting of which women are so fond becomes a bore to a man if required as part of the daily habit of life. . . Women who cannot live happily without being made love to, come badly off in the great struggles of life." And so the judicious adviser goes on to recommend that wives should not bore their husbands more than they can possibly help with "personal half-childish caresses, which were all very well in early days, but which become tiresome as time goes on." "We cannot but pity," he adds, with benign compassion, "the poor, weak, craving souls;" but still, "the more thoroughly women learn the true nature of men, the less unhappiness they will create for themselves;" and, finally, "the more patient men are with the hysterical excitability, the restless craving, which Nature, for some purpose at present unknown, has made the special temperament of women, the larger chance there will be of married happiness."

We confess all this counsel is as fresh to us as it is precious. Our experience—naturally far more limited than that of a *Saturday Reviewer* in the way of being adored, and bored with caresses—has led us to the manifestly egregious delusion that wifely tenderness was generally welcome to husbands; and that hard-worked, world-worn men, returning at night to their homes, rather desired to be greeted with coaxing and foolish little words, and to find that as years went on the romance of the bride was not altogether lost in the humdrum indifference of a dowdy and matter-of-fact wife. Henceforth we shall know better; and, above all things, teach our young friends, in seeking a partner for life, to make sure they do not choose a girl capable of any such sentimental folly, but rather one certain to settle down in a month, at furthest, after marriage, into a rational woman of the world, who heeds her husband's comings and goings as little as he regards hers, and thinks her dress and her dinners of infinitely more consequence than the mood in which he chances to come home. This, we shall know in future, is the ideal wife, at least for a *Saturday Reviewer;* and to such a type we trust the ladies of the present generation will hasten to conform themselves. It is touching to know that even one so hardly tried by female fondness as this unlucky gentleman, is yet capable of feeling "pity for the poor, weak, craving souls" who thus torment him (just as an indiscreet little terrier is apt to tease a too indulgent master), and is disposed to advise "patience" rather than severity to his masculine fellow-sufferers. He wails, indeed, that "when the man quietly keeps them off"—the caresses in question—"or more brusquely repels them," the wife too often (such is the incredible perversity of woman!) is "hurt and miserable, and thinks the whole happiness of their lives is dead, and all that makes marriage beautiful at an end." Truly it is too mild and amiable of one so loved to have any "pity" on such aggravating creatures! That a woman should presume to be "hurt and miserable" because she has offered her husband a "half-childish caress," and he has merely "kept her off," or "more brusquely repelled her," is surely only to be explained by that most unfortunate "temperament" which, as the Reviewer justly says, "Nature, for some purpose at present unknown, has given to woman."

Perhaps, however, after all, on reflection, there may be a little mistake about the matter. "Nature" is not apt to give to woman, or any other of her humblest produc-

tions, qualities wholly unmeaning, even though their "purpose" may escape the penetrating glance of a writer in the *Saturday Review*. We are tempted to ask, what would human life become if women ceased to be those loving, caressing—aye, and, let us add, love-craving creatures, of which this over adored gentleman so piteously complains? There are countries in which custom has trained them to be considerably more business-like or else pleasure-seeking than English wives commonly are, and after a sensible "*mariage de raison*" or "*mariage de convenance*," conducted with extreme coolness, they are apt rapidly to turn their attention to everybody and everything except their husbands. That such a state of affairs would be a great improvement if introduced amongst us seems not altogether clear. Of course there are to be found wives whose affection is not guided by tact, and who have the misfortune of being naturally demonstrative, while those whom they love are constitutionally the reverse. Few differences really cause more difficulty than this, and common sense points out that, when it exists, each should consider the other's temperament, and meet it tenderly. But to say that the little playfulnesses of affection are to be suppressed as impertinences, or laughed at as superannuated follies, as soon as the honeymoon is over, is to condemn us to make life as dry and hard as a high road without a primrose on the bank, or a violet under the hedge. None who have healthful interests to fill their time desire to live on caresses and pretty speeches; and if we might lift our thoughts to the possible condition of the wife whose delinquencies we have been called to study, we should venture to surmise that her husband, among his many lofty cares for the instruction of the universe, may have totally forgotten to give her either a share in his interests or freedom of money to follow interests of her own. Such women have been heard of in England—women who led in London very much the life of a Cairene hareem, and who, while surfeited with superfluous luxuries, have rarely possessed a £5 note which they could freely devote to any pursuit of their own choosing. That such a wife should, even in a morbid way, cling to her husband's love, and note each little variation of word and tone which marks the receding of the tide, is not, we think, very wonderful, nor even a sign of a very hopeless mental constitution. If it would not be presuming too much, and invading the province of our contemporary, we should venture, in conclusion, to give our advice to married couples with some modification of his *dicta* of patience on the masculine side and suppression of demonstration on the feminine. We should say to wives, "Use a little tact; but by all means go on loving your husbands with all the tenderness and all the romance—if they choose to call it so—of your nature." And we should say to husbands, "Thank God every day of your lives, if you have been given the blessing of a loving woman's heart; and keep your own near to it, that you may escape the curse of growing hard and cold, and learning some day, perhaps, to write saturnine reviews, and sneer superciliously at 'half-childish caresses.'"

FRANCES POWER COBBE.

Is a man too good for Church-going?

The Christian Register has a story of a conspicuous Church member, devout, generous, public-spirited, who came to his minister and explained that for excellent reasons he would be absent from church for the next few Sundays. The minister replied, "It is all right, and you need never come to church again unless you wish to. *I can do nothing more for you as you are a finished product.*" No doubt that was a flattering commendation and it is probable that that minister had indeed exhausted his power of helping and inspiring his friend. But have the "finished products" no place in worship? Is the really good man excused from church attendance? Surely the church wants him more than others. How much are the rest of the worshippers impoverished by the absence of this shining example! We want the sympathy of his presence, the atmosphere of his goodness, the contributions which he can make to the tide of devout feeling in that place. Is it not a mistaken conception of church fellowship that a man's chief reason for joining with others in the sanctities of public worship,

is for what he *can get*. The "finished product" has something, nay, has a great deal, *to give*. The mere presence of a good man is often like noble music. Men look at him and remember what he is, what he has done, his shining outstanding character, his self-denials, his grace of manner, his spotless name, his magnanimity, and they are touched and moved inevitably towards better things. It may be that such a man can do without the sympathy and communion of his fellow men in religion, but surely the point of importance is that they cannot do without him. They need the help of his fervour, the encouragement of his companionship in the utterance of their praise and prayer. It is something to others that he should be there, since by his presence he helps to make strong and full the spiritual currents that flow from heart to heart, so that without him the worship is poorer and the blessing scantier than it need have been. Every look, word, thought of sympathy with goodness, helps to make goodness possible. Every prayer that rises to heaven for the right and good, is so much help to the honest man. That the nobly good should be excused from worship because they are so good is as if the strong should be excused because they are strong from living with and helping the weak.

S. K.

London Guilds Union.

THE Annual Meeting of this Union was held at Highgate, on Wednesday, Feb. 6th. The President, Mrs. W. Bruce, occupied the chair, and was supported on the platform by the Revs. A. A. Charlesworth, F. K. Freeston, G. Cooper, W. H. Rose, Mr. A. Thompson, E. Noel, and H. Toy; Miss Berry, Miss Tremain, and Miss Withall.

The Secretary presented the annual report, which stated that six Guilds were at present connected with the Union, viz.:—Essex Church Guild, Mansford Street, Highgate, Stepney, Stratford, and Walthamstow. Four general meetings of the Union had been held during the year. The "National Conference Guilds Union" having arranged a United Guilds Service, to be held at Oxford on Easter Monday, it was decided to hold the April meeting of this Union conjointly with the meeting at Oxford. A large party of Guild members visited Oxford, and spent a most enjoyable day. In the evening a very impressive and inspiring service was held in Manchester College Chapel, the devotional part of the service was conducted by the Rev. J. Ellis, and the address was given by the Rev. F. K. Freeston. The annual summer excursion was held on Saturday, July 14th, when a number of Guild members visited Greenwich Park. The Autumn Meeting took the form of a United Service at Essex Church on Wednesday, Oct. 10th; the Rev. A. Golland led the devotional part of the service, and Dr. Crothers, of America, gave the address. The Committee especially commend to all Guild members Dr. Crothers' words:—"The Guild members ought not to think of themselves as belonging to some separate little organization, but as part, and a very important part, of the Church to which they belonged."

The London Guilds Union was represented at the meetings of the National Conference at Oxford, during Easter week, by the President, Vice-President, and Secretary.

At the Oxford Summer Session for Sunday School Teachers, held last July, the Vice-President, the Rev. F. K. Freeston gave an address on "The Guild Movement in its relation to Sunday School work." This was the result of a resolution passed by the members of the Union, at a meeting held at Mansforld Street, on Oct. 25th, 1905. The report concluded by saying that the year's work had been fruitful in cementing old friendships and forming new ones.

The Treasurer then read the statement of accounts, which showed a small balance in hand.

In moving the adoption of the report and balance sheet the President gave a brief account of the work being done by the individual Guilds belonging to the Union. The President also emphasized the necessity for studying social questions in our Guild work. Attention was also drawn to the prize essay scheme under the direction of the National Conference Guilds Union Committee.

Mr. Alfred Thompson formally seconded the adoption of the report and balance sheet, which, on being put to the meeting, was carried unanimously.

The officers for the year were then elected as follows:—President, Mr. Withall, of Highgate; Vice-President, Mrs. Wallace Bruce; Treasurer, Mr. E. Noel; Secretary, Rev. W. H. Rose.

Mrs. Bruce then gave an interesting account of a work by Mr. F. Hall, "The Soul of a People." The Rev. A. A. Charlesworth, Rev. F. K. Freeston, and Miss Punnett afterwards spoke.

After a hearty vote of thanks had been accorded Mrs. Bruce for her services the meeting was closed with the Benediction.

Stars, like Christians, utter their silent voices to all lands and their speechless words to the ends of the world. Christians are called to be like stars, luminous, steadfast, majestic, attentive.—*Christina G. Rossetti.*

"The Brethren of the Common Life."

[From a Paper read to the Essex Church Guild.]

Gerard Groot, the founder of the Brotherhood, was born in 1340, at Deventer, in Holland. Educated at the school of his native town, at the famous University of Paris, and afterwards at Cologne, he became a Canonist, that is to say, a Church lawyer, held several benefices, and lived in the great luxury then common among the clergy. Some friend, however, seems to have succeeded in arousing in him a sense of shame at this mode of life, and we next find Groot, roughly clad, preaching up and down the diocese of Utrecht. In 1383 his licence to preach was withdrawn, and after a vain appeal to the Pope Gerard turned to what was to be the great work of his life. He settled in Deventer, and the young men in the school there, and others from the neighbourhood, who had been influenced by his preaching, came to him for advice and instruction. Then, acting on a suggestion of one of their number, Florentius Radewins, though after some hesitation, for Groot feared the jealousy of the friars, he proposed they should all live together and support themselves by what they could earn in copying books. So here we have the first community of the Brethren of the C. Life—just a band of young men living together, and united only by a common desire for purity, for the instruction of themselves and others and for honest labour. Membership was purely voluntary; from first to last no vow was ever imposed on the Brothers. Two or three other little communities modelled on this at Deventer soon sprang up, and Groot, who saw that the voluntary nature of their society would lead to great diversity between the different houses, conceived the idea of having some central body, bound by stricter rules, to hold those various communities together, and possibly supply heads for them. He seems to have paid a visit to the mystic Ruysbrock, in his quiet retreat at Grünthal, which decided him to adopt the rule of the Augustinian Canons for this central body. Groot died before he could carry out his idea, but Florentius, who succeeded him at Deventer, founded the Austin Canons at Windesheim on the lines he had suggested. This Florentius, like Groot, was no great scholar, but a simple, wise man, much reverenced by the Brothers, and consulted by men of all ranks in society. Under his rule the Brother houses spread rapidly, but perhaps it would be as well to give here some more detailed account of the constitution and work of these communities. About twenty or thirty was the usual number in a House. All, even the head, took it in turns to perform the necessary household duties, but beyond that each was free to follow his own bent, whether it were towards writing or teaching. I have said they were bound by no vows; consequently all who remained, remained of their own free will, and brought to their work an enthusiasm which may account for their very great success all through the Rhine country.

The work they undertook may be divided roughly into three branches.

(1.) Training of the common people.
(2.) Education.
(3.) Copying of books.

Under that first heading would come their preaching in the common tongue, and what was perhaps of still greater value the "collations" they held. These collations were meetings generally at a Brotherhouse of a dozen or more people, where one of the Brothers would expound a piece of the Scriptures, and a general discussion would be held on it.

But undoubtedly the Brethren are best known for their educational work. Some of their schools held at one time as many as 1,000 pupils, and many prominent scholars received from them their earliest teaching. Their course of study would not now be considered a particularly wide one, but it was certainly an advance on that usually followed then; it comprised reading, writing, singing, pure Latin, as distinct from the very corrupt form of it taught by the followers of scholasticism, and the elements of religion, and especially Bible history. Art and science were rather discouraged.

Copying and circulating books was also an important part of their work in these early days, and in connection with this I will men-

tion Gerard Terbolt in particular. He was librarian at Deventer for many years, and we have two most interesting treatises of his on the value of translating the Bible into the common tongue, and on the use of the common tongue in the church services, and especially in prayer. In both these Terbolt shows himself much in advance of the opinion of his day. This use of the vernacular, encouraged by the Brethren, had far reaching consequences. It quickened true piety among the people at large by making it possible for everyone to take an active part in the services; and it also helped to destroy a very important bond in the Catholic Church, the common tongue of Latin—and so encouraged the tendency towards the formation of National Churches.

Another man I ought perhaps to mention is John Wessel, the great theologian of this group. He comes later, was born in 1420, and was not, properly speaking, one of the Brethren at all; but he was trained in their school at Qwolle, probably knew à Kempis intimately, and often retired to the latter's monastery of Mt. S. Agnes. His theology I will not attempt to go into, but for an opinion on it Luther may be quoted: "If I had read Wessel sooner my adversaries would have presumed to say that I had borrowed my whole doctrine from him.".

The last brother I shall speak of is à Kempis, but as he represents quite another aspect of the Brethrens' activity, perhaps it would be best before going into him in detail to quickly trace the farther extension and final decay of these Communities. They lasted altogether about 200 years, and their period of greatest prosperity was during the fifteenth century. One fierce attack was made upon them by the ever jealous friars at the Council of Constance, on the ground that they had no right to exist as communities, unless they bound themselves by the usual monastic vows. However, the Brethren were eloquently defended by John Gerson, the famous Chancellor of the University of Paris, in a remarkable speech. In it he dismisses as absurd Friar Grabow's contention that the only truly Christian life is one lived under the special vows of a religious order; "For that," he says, "would exclude Christ himself from religion." The precepts of Christianity are such as can and ought to be practised by everyone, and it would be a great error to suppose Mnoachism to be the perfect religion. The result of this action on the part of Gerson was the recognition of the Brethren afresh by Pope and Council.

Brother houses were built during this period all over the Netherlands, in Cologne, and the places near by, and some even as far afield as Swabia; and yet hardly one of them survived to the seventeenth century. This curiously rapid decline seems to call for some explanation, seeing that the Brotherhood fostered many of the most vital principles of the Reformation. Some of the causes would seem to be these.

(1) The growth of printing deprived them of their occupation of copying, where before they had had almost a monopoly they now became merely a few amongst many.

(2) In education they were supplanted by their own pupils. Men who had been trained in their schools would often go to Italy, meet there with the New Learning, grow away from their old masters, and then perhaps return to Germany and train up pupils of their own on the more enlightened methods they had learnt. The schools of the Brethren became out of date and were deserted for those of a newer type.

(3) Their great work of introducing the mother tongue into the services ceased to have any peculiar merit as soon as the practice became general. But apart from these points of detail, the Protestant Reformation put the Brotherhood in an altogether untenable position. It was loyal to the Catholic Church, and yet held essentially reformation ideas, and it was crushed between the opposing forces of Protestant Reform and Catholic counter-reform. The communities had to choose between becoming Protestant, which meant extinction, and conforming to the usual Catholic monastic discipline under pressure from the Jesuits.

And now to return to Thomas à Kempis. One or two people, to whom I have spoken about this paper, have exclaimed at the very idea of treating him as at all a man who contributed anything to the Reformation. Still I suggest that à Kempis, who in the "Imitation" has focussed for all time all that was

best in mysticism, at any rate represents a certain very important force in the Reformation, if he can in no sense himself be called a Reformer. All through the Middle Ages when many spent their best force on the futile arguings of Scholasticism, which never led anywhere because committed already to certain orthodox conclusions, it was often the Mystics like S. Bernard to whom à Kempis owes so much, who were fostering the true spirit of Christianity. And coming to the Reformation we recognise that that drew much of its strength from this source, as well as from the great impulse of the people to be rid of the abuses of the Roman Hierarchy.

Thomas Hemerken was born at Kempen, near Düsseldorf, in the year 1380. His parents were devout folk who had probably come under the influence of Tauler or a follower of his. (Tauler, to explain him a little, was a mystic who, like Groot, spent his days preaching up and down the Rhine country; it is interesting to remember that Luther knew his writings well and acknowledged his debt to him.) Thomas à Kempis, then, for he is called this after his birthplace Kempen, was brought up in an atmosphere of piety. He must have early shown a taste for learning, for he was sent at 13 to the school at Deventer. During his seven years' stay there he was much with the Brethren, and gradually came to be looked on as one of them. In 1400 Florentius, who had realised the bent of à Kempis' character, suggested to him he should become one of the canons at the newly-founded monastery of Mt. S. Agnes, an offshoot of Windesheim. A Kempis at once agreed, for he too felt he was best fitted for a life of quiet and contemplation; and so leaving Deventer and Florentius, he went to Mt. S. Agnes, and there, except for one short break, he stayed till his death in 1471. Of these long years at Mt. S. Agnes there is not much to say. Life there, as amongst the freer communities of Brothers, was moulded on the pattern of the early Christians. To quote from a recent book on the subject: "Nothing in excess was the ideal of the Community. The body was to be made absolutely efficient for the purposes of the soul, and the duty of man to his neighbour was to shadow forth the duty of man to his God. Perfect simplicity in dress and manners, food and drink, work and play, was the ideal for the body; perfect charity to all men, to the young, to the sick, to the sinful, was the ideal for the mind; and the love of God which passeth all understanding was the ideal for the soul."

A Kempis probably made the copying of books and the writing of manuals his special duty, and later on the teaching of the novices. By far the best known of his manuals is the "Imitation of Christ," written about 1420, soon after he took orders. This little book is in one sense not an original work. Phrase after phrase can be traced back directly to its source in the Bible, or in one of the earlier mystics as S. Augustine or S. Bernard. But it is the spirit which animates it as a whole, and also its wonderful felicity of language which we owe to à Kempis. We feel that he himself has experienced and proved the truth of what he writes, and so that book comes to us with a quite unique appeal.

I do not propose to quote to you much of the "Imitation." Most of you probably know it already, and if you do not, copies are easily obtainable, and it is essentially a book for private study. But I would just like to say this, that I do not think we need look on à Kempis as altogether the selfish dreamer some would have us believe him to be. He may not have gone about actively doing good; but he certainly gives to anyone who chooses to take it from him, an inspiring view of life, and one that is often truly social. Take this passage from the first book: "He does much: that loves much. He does much: that does a thing well. He does well: that serves the community rather than his own will."

And this: "But now God hath so ordered it that we may learn to bear one another's burdens; for no man is without fault, no man without his burden, no man sufficient for himself, no man wise enough for himself; but we ought to bear with one another, comfort one another; help, instruct, and admonish one another." And then this: "If thy heart were right: then every creature would be a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine." And—"Such as everyone is inwardly: so he judges outwardly." And lastly this: "From a pure heart comes the fruit of a good life. We ask

how much a man has done; but with what virtue he does it is not so carefully weighed. We ask whether he is brave, rich, handsome, clever, a good writer, a good singer, a good labourer; but how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and inward is seldom heard."

A Kempis, you see by these extracts, is not by any means blind to the duties of man to his neighbour. But he supplies what that age perhaps was specially in need of, a differently proportioned view of life. He transfers the emphasis from a man's outward acts to his inward attitude. And that takes us directly to his connection with the Reformation. The Reformer insists on Justification by Faith, as opposed to the Catholic doctrine of Justification by Works. I do not know if I have got hold of the idea aright; but I suggest that at the back of Justification by Faith is this central idea we find in à Kempis, that "Good Works" must be the outcome of a man's consciousness of his relations with God, and that they will be the second step, so to speak, and not the first. It is the old idea we saw in Francis of Assisi, that the free impulse of Divine Love in man will move the world, and not a calculating obedience to outward law.

M. MITCHELL.

Notes and Jottings.

THE theme still uppermost in the minds of religious men is the "New Theology"—or, as a modern Nello with unconscious humour termed it, the "New Mythology." We are all awaiting with anxiety the return of Mr. Campbell, when the present lull will once more be lashed into storm.

* * * * * *

The Whit-week meetings of the Unitarian Association will acquire a unique interest through the presence of Mr. Campbell. as the Essex Hall Lecturer. The situation will submit him to a difficult dilemma. His position will not, of course expose him to any misunderstanding on the part of those who recognise the non-committal nature of the platform. But, in the hands of unscrupulous antagonists, the situation is capable of being manipulated to the prejudice of the lecturer. He has, we understand, undertaken to speak on the same theme to the Union of Ethical Societies, and this ought to safeguard him. It can hardly be said that he is at once a Unitarian and an Agnostic. But there is no knowing, for he has already been hailed as a Buddhist, a Theosophist, a Spiritualist, a Christian Scientist, a Mystical Ethicist. My researches have failed to discover that he has been called a Mormon or a Plymouth Brother. But perhaps this is to come.

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What will Mr. Campbell say? I imagine that his pronouncement will be a perfectly moderate and unsensational one which will cause the orthodox to regret their panics and palpitations. Our concern, I suppose, will not be so much with the details of his theology as with his general outlook on the future of Religion, and his main principles of religious organisation. Will he strike a ringing blow against sectarianism and for catholicity? Will he speak fearlessly for Liberal Christianity and against dogmatic denominationalisms?

* * * * * *

On this question the *Christian World* has made a bold declaration. In a leading article on "Freedom in the Pulpit," these significant words appear: "Why should the Christian minister not be entrusted with the liberty of the scientist and the writer? Are not the conditions of the highest efficiency the same with him as with them? And are not the inner safeguards the same? Why should not this man be as free to seek and utter the highest truth in his sphere as the painter and the researcher are free in theirs? Are not the laws of truth and perfectness binding enough on his realm also?"

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The answer to these questions is the answer that will divide Modern Christendom into Dogmatic Catholics and Free Catholics. There can be little doubt as to the side on which Mr. Campbell will range himself. He has already withstood a sinister and sectarian attempt to organise a New Theology League, which was intended by its short-sighted advocates to be confined to the Congregational body and to be propagandist in character. So chagrined was one of the promulgators of this

narrow scheme that in his disappointment he told a *Tribune* representative the New Theology "will fizzle out."

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Instead of this, a Society for the Promotion of Progressive Theology is contemplated, and this is to be open to members of all denominations. Sectarianism is the enemy, and I rejoice that Mr. Campbell has defeated the project for a League and declared himself at the outset in favour of an undenominational Society. We must reserve our opinion of the new organisation until we have read the statement which is to appear in the next *Hibbert Journal*.

* * * * * *

I confess I am not much enamoured of a merely *theological* society, however undenominational and progressive. What we need is a *religious* society, to encourage the organisation of a really open and undogmatic Church. If the new society stands clearly and unequivocally for this it will gather to itself enthusiastic supporters from all points of the compass, and may achieve the inauguration of a new Reformation.

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I notice that the serious difficulty of doctrinal trust-deeds is being pooh-poohed. There will be a great bonfire of trust deeds in the near future, we are told. Will there? The problem is not so simple as all that. Legal documents cannot be destroyed or ignored at will as soon as their provisions are felt to be embarrassing and inconvenient. The Scotch Church case has not been decided for nought, nor can the moral of it be disregarded. You cannot have the "cohesion" of a creed-bound church and the sweets of liberty. Neither can you have an open church without the risks of Freedom,—"Freedom free to slay herself, and dying whilst they shout her name." The issue is a plain one—Religious Dogma or Religious Liberty? Choose!

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It is curious to find Dissenters showing a greater fear of schism than of moral compromise. I can understand a Roman Catholic like Father Tyrrell urging men to remain in the Roman Church spite of their repugnance to her dogmas. That communion has always regarded schism as the enormous crime. If any Church has a plausible case for "broadening from within" it is surely the Roman Church. If moral compromise is ever to be regarded as a lesser evil than schism it is in that communion. But if we recognise that this species of unveracity is justifiable at all, why are we still outside the Roman fold? Why do we not throw in the weight of such influence as may be ours and join the liberal wing of that Church?

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Or for Roman let us substitute Anglican. If we may complacently ignore the doctrinal trust deeds of a century or two without violating the canons of personal honour and public morality, why may not the Broad Churchmen ignore the creeds of far greater antiquity? If these are no longer ethically obligatory, why are we still Dissenters and "Why am I still persecuted?" The truth is that Protestants—and Dissenters especially—are irrevocably committed to the principle that the tragedy of a thousand schisms is to be preferred to the deeper tragedy of one single apostacy to truth. Let us split, in God's name, till the crack of doom rather than take a lie upon our lips in the solemn offices of religion, or violate the plain trusts on which our Chapels are held!

* * * * * *

Until the Church frees herself from dogma there can be no genuine religious advance. The real difficulty is not an academic point in the ethics of conformity but the temptation constituted by the bribe of "vested interests." "J. B." has put the matter squarely in the *Christian World* of February 7th, "What must also not be forgotten here is that the old, the established in theology, will by that very fact have gathered all the vested interests around it, which will naturally fight for its life as their own. The new faith, which begins by opposing an earlier order, may usually reckon on crucifixion."

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It is not any problem in casuistry that prevents men leaving their creed-bound or doctrinally trust-bound churches, but this fear of crucifixion. But how can we be disciples of Christ if we are not prepared to face the

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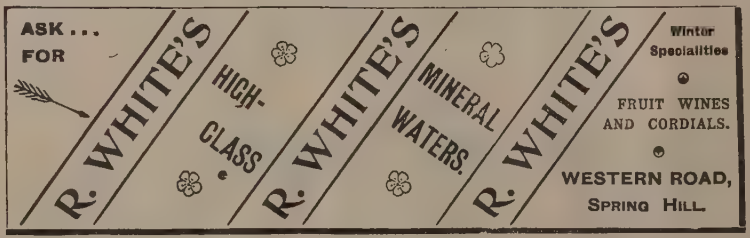

cross? To continue the quotation, "Jesus, greatest of revolutionaries, expected to be put to death by the vested interests, and was not deceived. Orthodoxy, that is to say, the line of life and thinking that has established itself, is sure of its army of defenders. *There is money in it, and the people who love money will accordingly be there.* On this side, too, are the honours and dignities. Annas and Caiaphas are well housed, and belong to the best Jerusalem Society. The Galilean has not where to lay his head."

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Here then is the real problem—a problem of moral practice not of moral theory. It is still the stumbling-block of the Cross that dismays us. No mere theology, however progressive, can save us or liberate the Church; not a new theology but a new moral and religious passion, a new devotedness to truth, an uncompromising zeal for liberty and a heroic love of goodness. Like Charlemagne summoned from his brief sleep to further exploits, we must rouse ourselves from fatigue and apathy and obey the behest, though we cry, like him, "O Christian God, the marching life I lead.'

J. M. Lloyd Thomas.

Children's Page.

Eleanor and the Cloud-Children.

By Alicia Aspinwall.

The sofa on which the sick child lay had been drawn up before the open window that she might have the benefit of each passing breeze.

Into the waving sea of cool green trees that shaded the house the little girl looked longingly. She envied the birds who, intent upon family cares, were flitting busily from branch to branch, explaining and vituperatively arguing the knotty points which are so constantly arising in all tree communities, and which demand instant and final adjustment.

Then her gaze wandered higher, till above and beyond it rested at last upon a cloud, a soft pink cloud, which all alone was sailing slowly through the sky.

"Ah," sighed the child, "I wish I were on that beautiful cloud. I shouldn't be tired any more. I'd be all well again, up there. There must be some way to climb up into the sky, too, if people only knew; and how happy we should be to sail all day through the sky world! Cloud, O cloud!" she cried, her thin little arms stretched pleadingly upward, "I canot go to you. Come down to me and take me with you." Anxiously she waited: the cloud seeming really to pause for a moment, directly over her head! Breathless, and with cheeks scarlet from excitement, Eleanor gazed upward, her whole heart in her eyes.

And, as she watched, one part of the cloud slowly separated itself from the rest, which sailed onward and away! Once more the child's cry rang pleadingly, "Come to me!"

Then—had a miracle happened in this every-day, well-ordered world? And had the cloud heard and responded to the sick child's appeal? In Eleanor's mind there was no doubt; for she saw that it had now left its high place in the sky above, and was slowly but surely *nearing the earth!*

Down and down it sank, the child watching, spell-bound, breathless! Nearer and nearer yet, now not far above the spreading elm-trees, and now resting lightly upon them, its pink radiance over all! Then slowly it drifted to the house itself, and, cautiously feeling its way through the little girl's window, stole to her and lay quietly at her feet! Without hesitation she rose and stepped lightly upon it!

Soundlessly the pink cloud floated out again, through the window, and up over the tops of the wide-boughed trees! The song of the birds grew faint and died away, as it gradually rose up and up into the sky, where it floated alone, till it reached at last the mother-cloud from which it had fallen.

Eleanor looked about bewildered, then slowly, cautiously, she walked forward, at each step sinking deeply down. The child trod gently, fearing lest she break through. But, finding that this did not happen, she went on with more confidence. As she proceeded, the cloud widened, spread out before her, and the pink radiance grew more intense.

"Oh, how beautiful! I wish—I wish—some one were here to see and enjoy it with me!" she cried.

As she said these words, there glided through the soft wall before her four young girls, children like herself, their long, shadowy garments floating gracefully, their hands outstretched in eager greeting.

"Welcome to thee, little Girl-of-the-world!" they cried, their voices like silver bells. "We heard thee call, we pitied thee, and we came to thee."

"I was ill," said Eleanor, "but I am ill no longer. I am grateful to you for coming. And do you live here, is this your home? Tell me of yourselves."

"We are the cloud-maids," answered the children, "and we live here always. One day is as another day, and of us there is nothing to tell. But ah! we have longed to know of the children below. Tell us of thyself and of them." And pressing about her, the Cloud-maids listened eagerly, while Eleanor told of her life in the

world,—first of her loving father and mother, of her brother and baby sister, and then of her school and games, the lovely faces of the little Cloud-children brightening with intensest interest as they listened.

The fever, which had been with Eleanor for days, had now left her; but she was languid and weak, and the cool softness of the enveloping cloud was sweetly comforting to her. Deeply she buried her thin hands in it, occasionally breaking off small bits and pressing her poor worn little face against its glowing pinkness.

Her story had been long, and gradually gray darkness had begun to close about them. One of the Cloud-maids, becoming aware of this, rose and, calling to the others, said:—

"It darkens, the hour is at hand. Come, my sisters," adding shyly, "and Thou-too-of-the-world, thou wilt join us?"

"Where are we going?" asked Eleanor, timidly.

"We bid our friend the Sun good-night," was the answer. "Nay, be not afraid, little one. We will guard thee, that no harm befall thee." And side by side the Maids, with Eleanor, stood lightly swaying, while the cloud, obedient to the call, sailed rapidly toward the west.

As it approached the Sun it became more and more pink, its edges touched as by living fire. Often had Eleanor seen clouds like this from without; but to be of it, to stand on it, was indeed exciting. Pinker and pinker yet it grew, palpitating, glowing, unspeakably beautiful.

"'Tis well, my sisters! Here let us remain," called one of the Maids.

Slowly and more slowly the cloud sailed, then remained at rest, poised lightly on the glowing sea of pink.

For a moment there was silence, and then—from their cloud, and from others about them, rose the glorious voices of the Cloud-maids, all singing together their evening song to the sun!

And often, in the years that came, did Eleanor hear again those exquisite voices as they rose and fell, swelled and died away, filling the air with a sweetness that to her was almost pain.

Ere the day fades
We, the Cloud-maids,
Hasten, Sun, to say good-night.
Darkness falling,
We are calling
To thee, Sun, good-night! good-night!

In the daytime
In our playtime
Thou dost give us warmth and light;
We are meeting
For this greeting,
In thy praise we all unite.

Downward bending,
Low descending,
We now bid thee, Sun, good-night;
Darkness falling,
We are calling,
Sun! Good-night! Good-night! Good-night!"

As the sound of the last "good-night" died away, the Sun sank slowly below the horizon, and darkness fell upon the earth.

And in that moment, from the wide silence about them, Eleanor seemed to hear faintly her mother's voice calling to her,—

"Eleanor! Eleanor! Come back to me!" And the realization of where she was came suddenly to her, and with it a great longing to return.

"Dear Cloud-maids," she begged, "my mother calls. Let me return to earth and to her."

With saddened faces the Cloud-children listened.

"But we had hoped, Child-of-the-world," they said wistfully, "that thou wouldst remain always with us, our friend and our playmate."

"It is beautiful here," answered little Eleanor, taking their hands, "but my mother calls. Let me, I pray you, return to her."

Again in the silence came the cry, more loudly now—

"Eleanor! Eleanor!"

"Thou shalt not remain, World-child," said one of the Cloud-maids, "unless of thy own free will. It is thy wish to return. Thou shalt go. Is it not so, my sisters?"

"Ay, if it be thy wish, thou shalt go," said all the sweet voices in unison.

The command was given, and the cloud sank down from its sky home, till once more it rested on the big elm-tree by the old gray house. Here the Cloud-children shrank back, waving shadowy hands in a silent farewell, while Eleanor glided through the open window into her familiar room.

Darkness was about her, and at first she could see nothing; but she heard the sound of some one sobbing in the room; then a voice, her mother's voice, saying:—

"O doctor, has my child gone from me?"

Turning, Eleanor saw standing at the foot of her bed the doctor, anxious, silent.

Again came the pleading mother-voice:

Doctor, has she—gone?"

"Mamma! Mamma!" cried Eleanor. "Don't cry, I am here. I—I—went up into the sky, away up to the Cloud-children. Ah, it was beautiful there! They wished me to stay with them always; but—I heard you calling to me, so I came back, and I won't leave you again, dear mamma! Never, never, any more."

"It is, please God, as the child has said," whispered the doctor.

—*The Christian Register.*

News from the Field.

THE changes in our ministerial ranks are neither so numerous nor so important as is sometimes the case, though they have their significance to all who are concerned, and their influence on the life of our Communion.

We observe, though we are ignorant of the reason, that the *Rev. F. B. Mott* has resigned his pulpit at Southport. He is said to be intending to devote himself to literary pursuits; but it is to be hoped that a sphere of active ministerial life is still before him.

Mr. Whittaker, B.A., leaves *Cardiff*, and has begun his ministry at *Hull*. *Cardiff* will, we hope, soon obtain a worthy pastor, and *Hull* will gain by the leadership of a capable man.

After a long and trying interval the friends at *Walsall*, through the good offices of the *Midland Christian Union*, have obtained the services of the *Rev. P. E. Richards, B.A.*; and *Whitchurch*, through the action of the same *Union*, is to have the services of the *Rev. W. J. Pond*.

The *Rev. R. Finerty*, who comes to join us from the Roman Catholics, has begun his ministry at *Ilminster*. Experiments like these are sometimes very risky, but we trust in this case the happiest results may follow.

The friends at *Sheffield* have secured the services of *Mr. J. W. Cock*, of *Oxford*, as an assistant to the *Rev. C. J. Street*, and to take charge of the new and most promising Mission Station, they have established.

Other changes there may have been of which we have no notice, but these show how active the work is, and how varied the life of our people.

Our newspapers are finding room for many contributions from various ministers among us on the pressing question of what is called the "New Theology," and we note, with interest, that the criticisms while recognising that there is nothing "new" in the Theology, except to the men who have just had the revelations borne in upon their minds, there is no wish to bind them down to the word Unitarian, or to urge them to take violent action with regard to their own congregations and brethren. This temper should be maintained among us, and the fine spirit displayed in the noble letter of *Dr. Horton*, and the chivalry displayed by *Dr. Clifford*, should animate our Congregational brethren.

It is pleasing and significant to note that the *Rev. Dr. Campbell* has agreed to deliver the Essex Hall Lecture at Whitsuntide. We applaud his courage, and hope that no ignoble criticisms will be uttered either by us or by others.

The Brahmos had a good time at Essex Hall, when they celebrated their 77th Anniversary. They found much sympathy among representative men from our free congregations.

The Manchester Unitarians are greatly exercised by the action of the City Council in submitting to the narrowness of the *Free (?)* Churches, in excluding them from the rota of services at the Cemeteries. But this is all of a piece with this intolerant body, who assume the name *Free* without having a glimpse even of its large and spiritual meaning.

Our friends at *Dover* are to be congratulated on the enlargement of their premises, and the consequent increase of their opportunities for usefulness; and the workers at *Hunslett* rejoice, most properly, in the progress they are making towards substantial independence.

Quite a lively time has been experienced at *Stourbridge*, where *Dr. Ewart*, coming out into a public hall, explains and discusses the New Theology, and invites questions and criticisms. Both are forthcoming, and, for a time, the storm of passion breaks over some of the critics, though at last all is tempered into sweetness, and the proceedings terminate with hymn-singing and prayer. The young Doctor is to be congratulated, both upon his courage and his success.

Already the appointment of the *Rev. T. P. Spedding* to take charge of the Van Movement is exciting interest and stirring up enthusiasm in various parts of the country. The Missioner is being called upon to go about the country to tell the story of the past, and to expound what is aimed at for the future. This Mission is evidently destined to become of great significance in the propagation of our principles throughout the United Kingdom.

The two Colleges—*Oxford* and *Manchester*—have been celebrating their anniversaries, the former for the last time in the city of its birth. In future it will be entirely centred in *Oxford*; while the latter tells the story of its new life in its new and noble home, and roots itself more firmly in the great city, where it was born, and in the religious activities of which it takes so large a share. Both must go on their way, and do their special work, and good wishes will go with them both.

The *Social Service* Committee and friends have had a useful meeting in Manchester, and are trying to stir up needful activities in all our congregations. They will do good, but it is difficult to see how they will produce concerted action in communities so small and scattered as ours. But the ideal should always be presented, and some workers may find a way to embody it in practical life and activity.

Month by month we have to chronicle the departure from our midst of men and women, who, in their various centres, have enriched our common life, and been sources of light and inspiration in their own immediate circles. Our story this month is full of a sad and stately significance, though it tells what nobility of life and conduct grows up in our garden of the Lord.

Shrewsbury has lost a good and noble veteran in the person of *Mr. Charles Hallam;* Manchester has suffered the loss of one of its merchant princes and workers in many good things, by the death of *Mr. Joseph Broome, J.P.;* Lyme Regis loses a valued and interesting personality in *Mr. W. J. Preston, J.P.;* Hastings grieves

over the death of *Mr. J. L. Evans;* and Norwich has lost one of its standard bearers in *Mr. D. C. Betts;*—while gracious women, rich in years and service like *Miss Lewin,* of Birkenhead, and *Miss Shaen,* of Weybridge, make us all feel as if we had been wrenched away from sweet influences which were around us all our lives. Among these losses one stands out in pathetic appeal. The venerable *Rev. W. Robinson,* one of the early students of the H.M.B., at the great age of 79, has passed on, after a quiet eventide, preceded by a long life of useful activity, not in the conspicuous places of the world, but where he was able to do good and faithful work, and has gone to the Great Presence, where he will render an account of his stewardship and find further joy in the service of our Loving Father. He was fortunate in his work and life, and, in his declining years, by the love and filial care of his only son.

We say to and of all these, and such as these, "the day of earthly life is ended, the night of death has passed, and now the Eternal day has dawned, where the larger life, and the nobler service will endure for ever."

Feb. 16th, 1907. SCRUTATOR.

A Free Catholic Church.*

WE have just received, too late for adequate notice, an advance copy of Mr. Lloyd Thomas's powerful plea on behalf of a Church at once Free and Catholic—free from all dogmatic and sectarian tests, Catholic as is the light of Heaven. Mr. Thomas's deliverance appears at an opportune moment, the New Theology having given rise to questions of subscriptions, Church Trusts, freedom for ministers and people, antiquated legalities of dogma, which scarcely any one now believes, yet which no one is courageous enough to tackle with a view to their abolition. The New Theology certainly calls for an undogmatic Church, for it is difficult to see how it can breathe in the swaddling clothes of ancient formularies. Not that Mr. Thomas has the new theologians specially in mind. His argument for a Free Catholic Church appeals to men of various theological schools who yet feel that Religion is something deeper, grander, more vital than their own particular views and opinions, and that the ministry for religion may unite men of very different theologies in common devotion and common service. We hope to give a more extended account of Mr. Thomas's plea next month. Suffice it now to say that Mr. Thomas writes with clearness and eloquence, and without any trace of prejudice against form of faith not his own. The chapters of his book are headed as follows:—1. "The Catholicity of Religion"; 2. "The Fulfilling of Christianity"; 3. "An Undogmatic Church"; 4. "The Importance of Doctrine"; 5. "The Need of Symbolism"; 6. "The Higher Churchmanship." The writer's aim, he tells us in the introduction, is "quite unsectarian, and is not so much to *make* converts as to *find* them." One other sentence may be quoted:—"In a Free Catholic Church it is believed will ultimately be found an Ideal which, if courageously worked out, will transcend or reconcile the opposition not merely of Anglicanism and Dissent, but of Romanism and Protestantism." That is a magnificent dream, and the little book is a contribution towards its realisation which everyone interested in the fortunes of the Church of God should read.

*A FREE CATHOLIC CHURCH. By J. M. Lloyd Thomas. London: Williams and Norgate. Price, 1s. 6d.

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